Stepping into the Literature Circle

Learning Targets

- Analyze elements of the structure and content of a text using text evidence with a Literature Circle strategy.
- Evaluate Literature Circles as a strategy to facilitate close reading and collaborative discussion of meaning in a text.

Introducing the Strategy: Literature Circles
A Literature Circle is made up of a group that all reads the same text and then participates in a discussion of that text. Each person in the group takes on a different role, with the roles rotating to each group member. The group discussion roles are Discussion Leader, Diction Detective, Bridge Builder, Reporter, and Artist.

Literature Circle Roles
Each role within a Literature Circle group has specific responsibilities. Performance of the roles rotates so that each person in the group has an opportunity to serve in each role.

Discussion Leader: Your job is to develop a list of questions you think your group should discuss about the assigned section of the book. Use your knowledge of Levels of Questions to create thought-provoking interpretive and universal questions. Try to create questions that encourage your group to consider many ideas. Help your group explore these important ideas and share their reactions. You will be in charge of leading the day’s discussion.

Diction Detective: Your job is to carefully examine the diction (word choice) in the assigned section. Search for words, phrases, and passages that are especially descriptive, powerful, funny, thought-provoking, surprising, or even confusing. List the words or phrases and explain why you selected them. Then, write your thoughts about why the author might have selected these words or phrases. What is the author trying to say? How does the diction help the author achieve his or her purpose? What tone do the words indicate?

Bridge Builder: Your job is to build bridges between the events of the book and other people, places, or events in school, the community, or your own life. Look for connections between the text, yourself, other texts, and the world. Also make connections between what has happened before and what might happen as the narrative continues. Look for the characters’ internal and external conflicts and the ways these conflicts influence their actions.

Reporter: Your job is to identify and report on the key points of the reading assignment. Make a list or write a summary that describes how the setting, plot, and characters are developed in this section of the book. Consider how characters interact, major events that occur, and shifts in the setting or the mood that seem significant. Share your report at the beginning of the group meeting to help your group focus on the key ideas presented in the reading. Like that of a newspaper reporter, your report must be concise yet thorough.

Common Core State Standards

Focus Standards:
RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Additional Standards Addressed:
RL.6.2; RL.6.3; RL.6.4; RL.6.5; SL.6.1a; SL.6.1b; SL.6.1c; SL.6.1d; SL.6.2; SL.6.6

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PLAN

Materials: copies of selected short stories or fairy tales, copies of double-entry journal pages and role sheets (optional); Walk Two Moons: Chapters 34 to the end for independent practice

Suggested Pacing: 2 50-minute class periods

TEACH

1. Divide the class into Literature Circle groups of five students each. If you end up with a group that is larger than five students, give multiple students in that group the same role. If a group is smaller than five students, have a student assume multiple roles. Consider posting the names and roles of the students in each group in order to avoid confusion.

2. Have students prepare for the reading by reviewing their role description and the activity in which they learned the skills necessary for their role. Have each student create a place card with his or her role title and a symbolic visual.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

You may want to laminate the role cards for use with Literature Circles throughout the rest of the school year.
ACTIVITY 2.11

Have students create a new double-entry journal page in their Reader/Writer Notebooks or make copies for them. Have students review the specific note-taking instructions for their role.

Use a short story or fairy tale that is familiar and accessible. This will give students an opportunity to practice the Literature Circle roles in a more focused way.

Leveled Differentiated Instruction

Some students may need additional support when preparing for their Literature Circle roles. Provide these students with these activities when they meet with their peers to prepare for their roles.

Help students express their ideas by asking and answering simple questions about their role. Help students record ideas from the discussion using a Collaborative Dialogue graphic organizer.

Have students respond to their discussion group by adding relevant information and paraphrasing key ideas. Encourage students to take notes based on the discussion.

Have students respond to their discussion group by adding relevant information, paraphrasing key ideas, and providing useful feedback. Encourage students to take notes based on the discussion.

Ask students to use their notes based on the discussion to write a short list of helpful hints to help someone preparing for their particular role in the Literature Circle.

Ask students to work with their discussion group to analyze their role and take notes based on the discussion. Then partners should plan a brief oral presentation about their role to share with the class. Remind students to speak clearly and with expression during their presentation.

Preparation for Discussion

1. Your teacher will assign roles and put you in Literature Circle groups to practice close reading and discussion of texts with a classic fairy tale. Review the directions for your role on the previous page. Also review the skills you learned in the following activities, where you were actually practicing the skills needed for each role:

   - Discussion Leader (Activity 2.7)
   - Diction Detective (Activity 2.8)
   - Reporter (Activity 2.9)
   - Bridge Builder (Activity 2.10)
   - Artist (Activity 2.10)

Create a placecard to use during the meeting. Include the role title and a symbolic visual on the front. On the back, write a brief description of your role.

Discussion Instructions

2. Keep a double-entry journal with notes that will help you prepare for your role. Remember to copy or summarize important passages on the left side of your journal. On the right-hand side
   - The Discussion Leader will keep track of questions to ask.
   - The Diction Detective will record interesting words and phrases, especially figurative language.
   - The Reporter will take notes on the setting, plot, and characters, especially shifts or changes.
   - The Bridge Builder will take notes on predictions, connections (text to self, text to text, and text to world) and conflict.
   - The Artist will take notes on how to create a visual representation.

3. Meet with the other students who are also preparing for the role you have been given. Share the notes that you took and discuss how you can use them in your Literature Circle meetings.

4. When your role is prepared, go back to your Literature Circle group. Review the guidelines for communicating in discussion groups, which you made in Activity 2.7.
Participating in a Discussion

5. At your teacher’s direction, team up with another group to use the Fishbowl strategy. While the inner circle is discussing the text, the outer circle will take notes on the Discussion Group Note-taking Graphic Organizer. After the first discussion, switch places so that the inner circle becomes the outer circle for the second discussion.

6. Give each circle (inner and outer) a chance to respond to the discussion, commenting on the strengths and challenges that each group had in its analysis of the text. Fill out the Group Meeting Reflection Chart on the following page. Reflect on what you can improve on during your Literature Circle meeting for the upcoming Embedded Assessment.

Discussion Note-taking Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Interesting Point Made by a Member of the Discussion Group</th>
<th>Support the Person Provided</th>
<th>My Thoughts</th>
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ACTIVITY 2.11 continued

Stepping into the Literature Circle

Group Meeting Reflection Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Text</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Check Your Understanding
Reflect on your discussion group experiences and how Literature Circle discussions contributed to your close reading of text and your ability to analyze meaning and make connections to ideas within and outside of the text.

Leveled Differentiated Instruction

To support students who may need extra review of the literary elements, have them collaborate to identify themes and conflicts from their stories. Divide students into three groups and have each group analyze the themes and conflicts.

- **Emergent** Help each group plan and deliver a brief presentation based on their discussion.
- **Exemplar** Guide each group to plan and deliver an oral presentation based on their discussion that includes details and evidence to support their ideas about the themes and conflicts.
- **Building** Have each group plan and deliver an oral presentation based on their discussion that includes reasoning and evidence to support their ideas about the themes and conflicts.

ASSESS

In addition to enabling self- and peer assessment, the Fishbowl strategy also allows you to conduct ongoing formative assessment of the Literature Circle meetings. Check student discussions for an understanding of the Literature Circle roles and their level of proficiency in preparing for and performing them.

ADAPT

If students are lacking any of the skills or knowledge necessary for success on Embedded Assessment 1, go back and review or reteach. For example, if you found in your assessment of the Literature Circle meetings that students were not using the levels of questions, consider repeating Activity 2.7 with another chapter of *Walk Two Moons* or an alternate text.